



What is Culturally Relevant Early Learning on Navajo Nation?

Legislative Education Study Committee
October 4, 2021



Culturally Relevant Early Learning Programs

Programs serving children ages 0 – 8 recognizing the importance of including children's cultural backgrounds, interests, and lived experiences in all aspects of teaching and learning.



Navajo Nation Early Childhood Programs



0 - 3 years

Part C: Early Intervention
Early Head Start



3 - 5 years

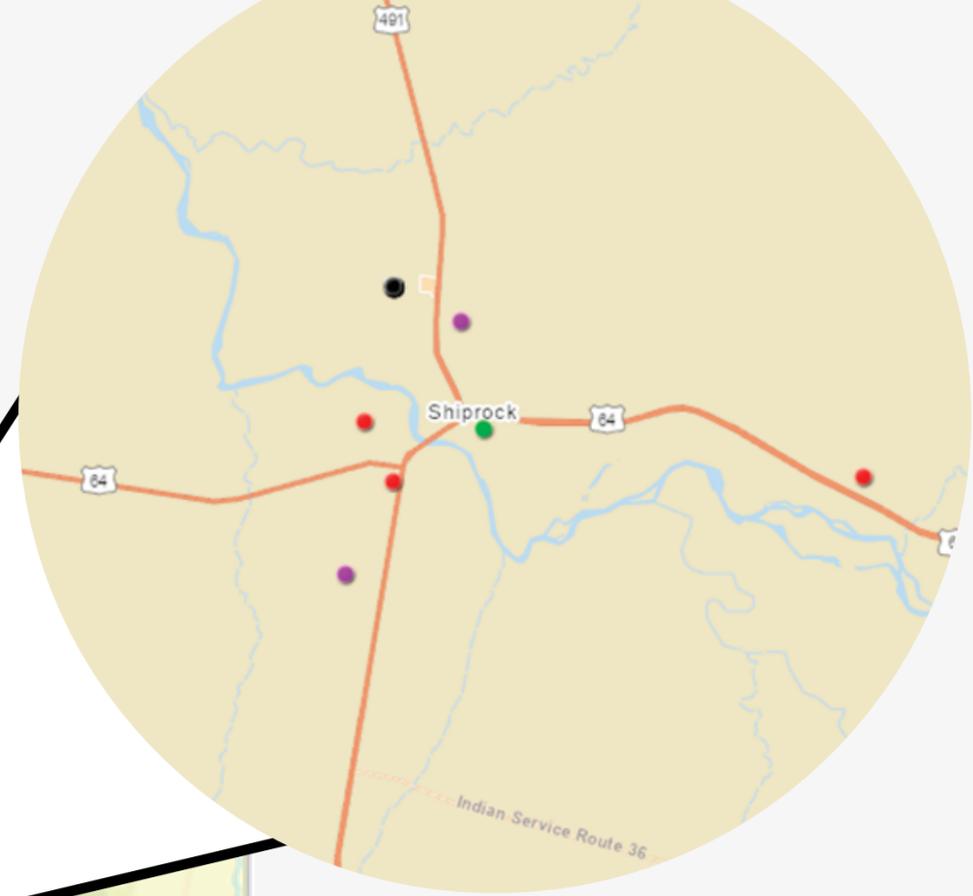
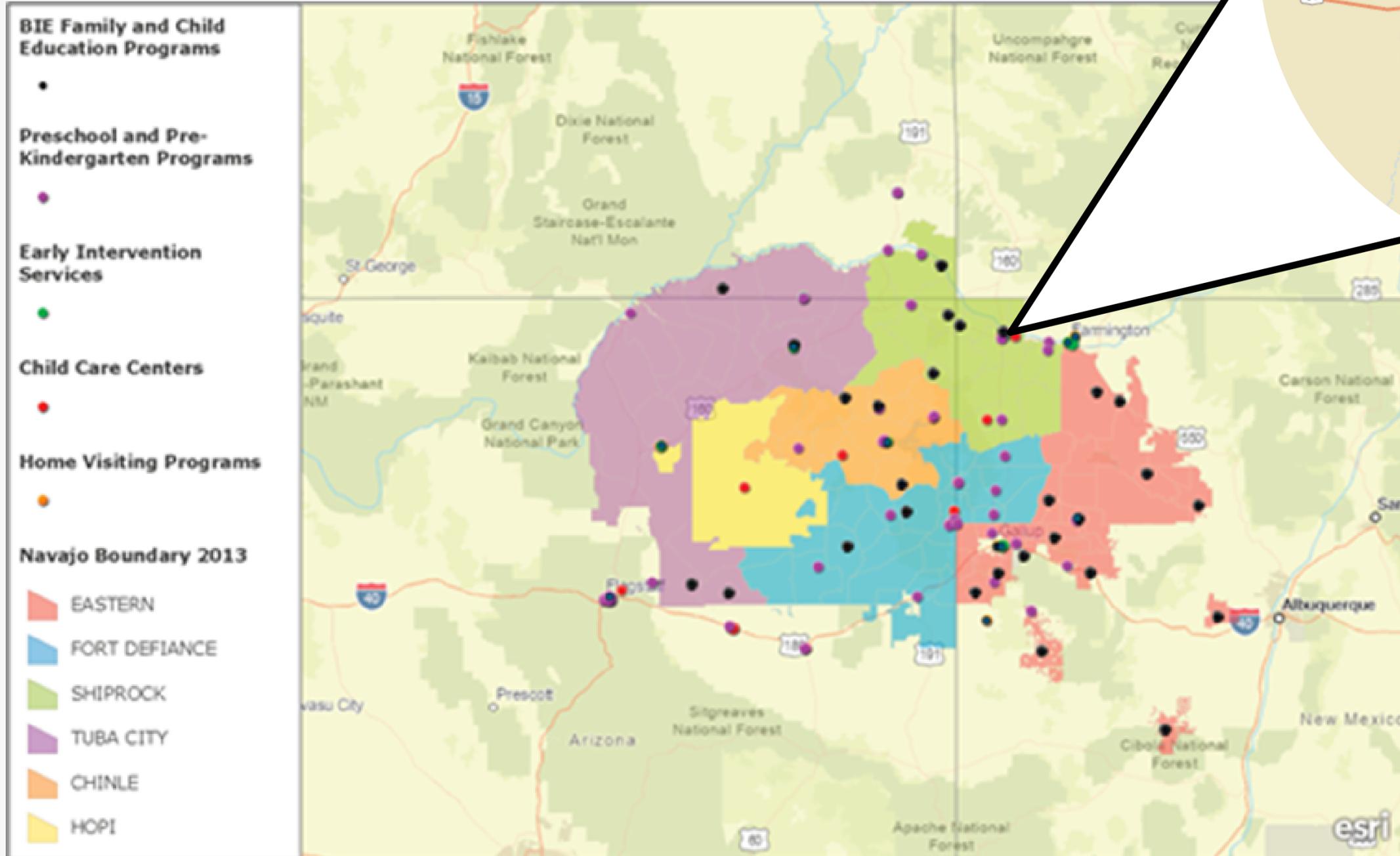
Home Visiting (0-5)
Head Start
BIE FACE
Part B: Preschool Services (3-5)



5 -8 years

Public School District
Charter School
BIE School
Child Day Care Center (0-8)

Beta Map of Early Childhood Programs in and surrounding Navajo Nation



Navajo Nation Early Childhood Support Programs

 **FIRST THINGS FIRST**

**Arizona First Things First
Navajo Nation Region**



**New Mexico Early
Childhood Education &
Care Department**



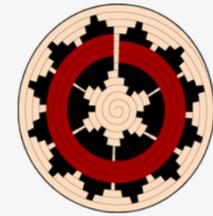
**Navajo Project Indigenous
LAUNCH**

Key Pieces



Kinship & Community

Understanding the Diné kinship system to identify self & your relationship to others



Culture & Language

Understanding the cultural values and traditions of Diné families. Incorporating Diné language in all parts of the system.



Capacity Building

Providing professional development opportunities, support, and training on culturally relevant teaching practices.



Strengthening Relationships

Creating space to build relationships with fellow EC programs, families and communities.

Impact of Culturally Relevant Education on Navajo Nation

Effective Learning

Recognizing and incorporating children and their families' cultural values, behaviors, learning styles greatly improves their learning in and outside early learning programs.

Improved Relationships

Culture-based education tied with strengthening authentic relationships with young children and their families improves the child's self-esteem, resiliency, self-identity, and confidence.

Shared Priority

Having a shared understanding and respect for the cultures present create strong links between home, early learning programs, and communities.



Challenges

Historical Trauma

Language Loss

Infrastructure

Limited Resources

Inequity

Siloed Programs

Western Approach

Culture Sensitivity



**Enhanced
Home
Visiting**

**Screening &
Assessment**

**Integration of
Behavioral Health
Into Primary
Care Settings**

Navajo Project I-LAUNCH's 5 Core Strategies

**Mental Health
Consultation**

**Family
Strengthening &
Parent Training**

Navajo Project I-LAUNCH's Efforts

Professional Development

Provides and connects early childhood stakeholders, providers, and professionals to professional development opportunities which often infuses Navajo Cultural Philosophies.

Navajo Nation Early Childhood Collaborative

Facilitates a growing group of early childhood stakeholders in, providers, and professionals across the Navajo Nation (Arizona and New Mexico) to come together and make necessary systems change in early childhood.

Navajo Nation Early Childhood Speaker Series

Partners with First Things First and Navajo Nation Division of Behavioral Health and Mental Health Services to provide public outreach on early childhood topics on various platforms (radio, social media, & Zoom) such as Traditional Birthing Practices, Trauma Informed Care, and more. Translation in Navajo is provided.

Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

Providing Infant & Early Childhood Mental Consultation to Navajo Head Start, Growing in Beauty Home Visiting, and Growing in Beauty Early Intervention while building a non-existent consultation system.

Navajo Nation Early Childhood Resources Map

Developing a map for early childhood providers and families to utilize the map to identify local early childhood resources, identify gaps, connect existing resources, and more.

"The basic logic of why culture is important to education is simple and intuitive, especially when it comes to making learning relevant: not all cultures are the same. In a country like the United States that prides itself on its cultural diversity, not all children achieve their highest potential in an educational system where relevance is based solely on Western approaches."

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